Darkness Falls

Story: Darkness Falls
Storylink: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/8186553/1/
Category: Lion King
Genre: Adventure/Romance
Author: ThatPersonYouMightKnow
Authorlink: https://www.fanfiction.net/u/3365186/
Last updated: 06/08/2012
Words: 18620
Rating: T
Status: Complete
Content: Chapter 1 to 7 of 7 chapters
Source: FanFiction.net

Summary: Simba and his friends battle to save the world, as a terrifying evil is unleashed...

Chapter 1: Chapter 1: Ahadi and the Figure

AN: Well, everyone, here we are. The culmination of Series Three. This is gonna be a big one. Plus, I love the villain. Probably the best one I've ever created. Yep, that's right – even better than Shocker. Shocking, isn't it?

Oh, well, enough from me. Here's a Pride Lands history lesson.

Darkness Falls

Chapter One: Ahadi and the Figure

"*No! No! Please! Anything but that! Anything!*"

King Ahadi smiled at the sound of the lion's pleading cries. He enjoyed them. His deep, hating, sadistic personality saw to that. Anything to do with pain pleased him. Or, to be more specific, the pain of others.

He had grown up with a lust for power. A hunger that demanded to be fulfilled. During his childhood he spent most of his time just itching to become the King. The rightful king that he deserved to be. He just couldn't wait to become King. But his parents were always so patient with him…

Ahadi wasn't. Maybe that's why he killed them. They just didn't understand that he needed to be the King. He *needed* to be. They wouldn't listen to him. Wouldn't give him what he wanted – what he *deserved*. And anyone who denied him what was rightfully his would suffer. They would suffer, and they would die.

From the day Ahadi murdered his parents, he knew that no one would ever defy him again. They would all listen. They would all… obey.

Yes. He liked that word. Obey. It gave him a sense of power. Of ultimate control over all. They were all bugs, and he would squash them if they didn't listen. He was their master now. And it would stay that way for ever.

He was promised that.

But then again, not all promises are kept.

"How lovely to see you again, Aha."

King Ahadi whipped around, to find himself staring at his mysterious ally. Shrouded in the darkness of the den, only two crimson eyes were visible to him. "Use my full name when you speak to me," Ahadi growled.

The figure chuckled, speaking in a voice that really didn't suit his appearance. He sounded fast-talking, and not at all scary or demonic. "Oh, come on, Aha," the figure continued. "Don't be so grouchy all the time. Learn to live a little." The two glowing red eyes glanced toward the outside of the den. "I see you've gotten rid of another one of your beautiful subjects."

"He was a weakling," Ahadi responded. "Not good enough to live here. Sometimes I think hardly *any* of them are good enough for this kingdom."

"Aha, baby, you just can't go throwing out people left, right and centre," the figure said, shaking his unseen head. "You've gotta control them. Organise things. Plan things. Where's your tight grip over the people? I don't see those fancy claws of yours clenching."

"I control them enough," replied Ahadi. "They know who their leader is around here. They all fear me."

"Okay, so they fear you, sure, but that doesn't exactly mean they're *listening*. You need to get them to work, to *serve* you. Aha, baby, right now they're not doing any of that. They're just sitting around in a starving, dehydrated mess while you lie up here acting like you're king of the world."

"Do not insult me!" Ahadi roared, his eyes blazing with anger. No one dented his pride and got away with it.

"Aha, those angry little ticks of yours aren't gonna brush with me," said the figure, unaffected by Ahadi's anger. "I've known you – well, I've *watched* you – for too long now. I think I know how to keep that hot temper of yours under control. So, what do you say, huh? I think times like this call for a little change in personality."

"I need to change *nothing*!" Ahadi retorted. "I have all that I want! This kingdom will obey me until the day that I die!"

"Well, Aha, let's face it: you're getting on," the figure told him. "You're not exactly a teenager anymore. You've got a kid of your own. A cub with morals that are actually good and decent. That's gonna need to be altered if you wish to find yourself a good successor."

"My son is irrelevant in all of this," Ahadi replied. "He only came about as the result of his whiny, pathetic mother."

"Yeah, and you soon saw her off, didn't you?" said the figure. "Well, if you replaced 'saw her off' with 'broke her neck', but you get what I mean, right?"

"She was worthless," replied Ahadi. "She deserved to die. Plus, she gave birth to an equally worthless son."

"Seriously?" the figure said. "Well, there are a variety of techniques you could use to change his worthlessness into absolute greatness. Brainwashing, psychological torture, death of a family member."

"His mother died when he was barely born," Ahadi said. "I don't think it would have affected him very much."

"Then kill that little girlfriend of his," the figure suggested. "What was her name, Sarabo or something?"

"Her name is Sarabi. And, as much as I hate to admit it, she's too clever," said Ahadi. "If I tried to murder her, then she would find a way to escape in an instant." His claws clenched in anger. "I *hate* people like that."

"Then maybe it's time to find someone else to become your heir," said the figure. "Maybe… it's time to find another son."

"Another son?" Ahadi's eyes widened. "*Another son*? Where the hell am I supposed to get another son from?"

"Find another mate," the figure replied. "Can't be too hard for a lion of your position. What can I say? You've got the right… posture. Do the 'dirty business' with her, get another son, and then raise him up to be a super-duper evil successor. Give the kid a hard cubhood. Maybe give him a scar. Right down the eye. In fact, call him Scar. I like that name."

"Scar?" Ahadi considered the name, and then let a smile cross his face. "I like the sound of that."

"I knew you would, baby," replied the figure. "I know you inside and out. Quite literally, actually. You may want to get that stomach of yours checked out, it's looking a little… yellow, if you get what I mean."

"No, I don't know what you mean, and I don't particularly care," Ahadi shot back. "All I care about is arranging for a worthy successor."

"Aha, baby, you're the man," said the figure. "You're on top of this, right? I don't need to come in again to sort things out, do I? Because if I *do*, then most likely this pride is gonna go up in a fiery ball of death. I mean, there's only so much I can take."

"Are you sure that this new son of mine will be up to the job?" Ahadi asked.

"Aha, it'll be fine," the figure assured him. "I mean, come on, it's not like your son's son is gonna kill him, huh?"

"Thank you," Ahadi said to the figure. "I am grateful for your advice."

"Aha, baby, you've got *no* idea how much this is gonna help in the long run. Now, I've gotta go. You see, there's this forest place called FernGully that I've gotta burn down. But I'll see ya very soon. As in, when you're dead."

"Sorry?"

But the red eyes had disappeared.

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: Blast from the Past

Chapter Two: Blast from the Past

Nala loved to watch Simba sleep. He looked so adorable and peaceful while doing it. The way his head rested on his soft paws; the way his cute little nose twitched; and the way he always seemed to have a little smile on his face. It just… made her happy.

Oh, Simba, Nala thought with a smile, ruffling the tuft on Simba's head. *Why is it I love ya so much?*

"Don't mess with the tuft," said Simba groggily, awakening from his sleep. "Or suffer the consequences." His eyes flickered open, and he was surprised to find Nala staring back at him. "Nala?" His eyes widened. "Oh, it's… it's you. I thought you were… somebody else for a second there."

"Somebody else?" exclaimed Nala. "Who else would be messing with your tuft?" she asked.

"I thought Haiba was trying to kiss me in my sleep or something," Simba replied, rubbing his eyes with a paw. "It's not unusual for him, that's for sure." He looked around the den. "Where *is* Haiba, anyway?"

Nala shrugged. "I don't know," she answered. "Last time I saw him was last night, when he showed us that trick where he could swallow his own blood and then make it appear in your mouth."

Simba stuck his tongue out, rubbing it with a paw. "Yeah…" he said. "Not exactly the *best* night I've ever had. Do you know what it's like to taste someone else's blood? Well, you probably would, actually – you were a vampire once."

"I don't know what happened, though," Nala told him. "I lost my memory. Thanks to Tama. She could be really mean, sometimes."

"So could my fifth girlfriend," remarked a voice from behind the two cubs.

Simba and Nala turned around to see Haiba walking towards them. "*There* you are," Simba said, actually sounding a little relieved. "We thought you'd run off to some far-off place in the middle of nowhere."

"Like that place with the frog?" replied Haiba. "Nah, I haven't been there. I just went for a morning walk." He sniffed the air. "It's a lovely morning today. Could be the most peaceful day in the world."

"Either that or the day Shocker tries to get his revenge," said Simba, a suspicious look crossing his face as he turned around to look out of the den.

"Uh-oh." Haiba whispered in Nala's ear. "He's got The Look again."

"You never know," Simba continued. "He could be out to give us the shock of our lives!"

"Did you say that pun twelve times before you went to sleep?" Haiba asked. "Sounds like you were working on it all night."

"It was just… coincidence," Simba responded. "With a name like Shocker, you can't really blame me."

Nala sighed. "You just don't look on the bright side anymore, do you? I remember the days when we would just play Pinned Ya all day. Now it's always 'save this' and 'stop that'. Gets pretty annoying sometimes."

"Gives you a good rush, though," Haiba said. "Great exercise, too. I feel like I could run a mile these days. Maybe even *two*."

"Is it 'happy, happy, happy' day all of a sudden?" Simba asked, turning back to the two. "What is it with you being so… cheerful?"

Haiba shrugged. "How should I know? It's just one of those days. I thought *you* would be happy, too."

"I'm *never* happy!" Simba exclaimed, prompting Nala and Haiba to look very surprised. "Oh, you know what I mean!" He let out an annoyed cry, pulling at his tuft with his forepaws.

"Simba, what's wrong?" Nala asked, taking a step towards her boyfriend. She put a paw on his shoulder. "You look… mad."

"Oh, I don't know, it's just…" Simba looked at Nala. "Something weird happened to me last night."

"What, that trick with the blood?" asked Haiba. "I did try to warn you, but you wouldn't listen."

"Not that." Simba shook his head. "This… dream I had." He looked a little confused. "At least, I *think* it was a dream."

"What do you mean?" asked Nala. She got the feeling that Simba was having mental problems again. That seemed to happen from time to time. As if something was getting into Simba's head. She just couldn't figure it out.

"It was… um, my dad's dad," Simba started to explain, looking as if he was straining to remember the dream – if it *was* a dream – he had last night. "He was… talking to this guy. I don't know who he was, but… I think he told him to give birth to my Uncle Scar."

"I don't think male lions can give birth, Simba," said Haiba.

"You get what I mean," replied Simba. "He wanted to *find* someone to give birth to my Uncle Scar. Apparently he wanted his whole pride to suffer. It makes me wonder, though."

"Wonder what?" Nala asked.

"Well… what happened?" Simba looked very intrigued. "What happened to King Ahadi? How did he die? And who was that guy he was talking to?"

"Simba, it was just a dream," Nala told him. "I don't think any of it was supposed to be real. It was just one of those… weird nightmare thingies, right?"

"I don't think so," said Simba, shaking his head. "It didn't exactly… feel like a dream. More like… More like I was seeing something that had actually happened."

"Like you were seeing into the past?" asked Haiba, raising an eyebrow. "Can't say I've ever heard of *that* happening before."

Simba scratched his head in confusion. "It makes my brain itch just thinking about it." He sighed. "Man, my life is weird."

"Well, I don't know about you, but I'm going to see what's happening down at the water hole," said Haiba. "Plus, I need a drink. Like, *really* badly."

"Good." Simba walked past the two, heading out of the den. "I need to go outside and think. It's too crowded in here."

Nala and Haiba looked around the empty den. "But it's just the three of us," Nala pointed out. "That doesn't make any—"

"You know what I mean!" Simba interrupted.

"Actually, I *don't* know what you mean!" Haiba retorted, following him out of the den. "Explain it. *Please*!"

"Look, it's just that I have a bad feeling about—" Simba stopped dead as soon as he walked outside, his eyes going wide.

Nala and Haiba stared at him. "Uh, Simba?" Nala tapped him on the head. "Did I accidentally hypnotise you again? Simba?"

"Just leave him," said Haiba. Since she was focusing on Simba, she didn't notice that his eyes were glowing red. "It's just another one of his weird little trances."

Simba's eyes grew wider, as a strange scene – from years and years ago – presented itself before him.

King Ahadi was surprised when his mysterious, unseen ally appeared again.

This time it was by the water hole, very late at night. His face was darkened by the looming shadow of a tree. A tree that two certain cubs would come to meet by many years later. "Aha, babe, you're just not getting the picture, are you?"

Ahadi actually found himself a little scared at the sound of the voice. Turning around quickly, he faced the darkened, mysterious figure. "You again," said Ahadi. "It's been months. What do you want this time?"

"I must say I'm very disappointed in ya, Aha," said the figure. "*Very*, very disappointed. So disappointed that it just makes

me feel… Well, like a dope, if I'm honest."

Ahadi narrowed his eyes. "Just what exactly are you referring to?" he asked.

"Your new son, Aha," replied the figure. "You see, I've taken a little peek at his future – just to be on the safe side – and I've gotta say it's not looking bright. Granted, he wasn't killed by your son's son, but he still gets murdered."

"What?" Ahadi was in outrage. "How could you possibly know of such things? I know you're a very mythical creature, but the type of power you're speaking of… Well, it just isn't possible."

"The correct term is 'magical', Aha, baby," said the figure. "And I happen to be the most magical… *thing* of them all. You're son's gonna be a total failure. Sure, he'll try his best to enslave the kingdom – but in this world, trying means nothing. Your older son – brave little Muffy – is still gonna come out on top. So, I'm afraid that the time has come, Aha."

"Time?" Ahadi was confused. "What the hell are you talking about, you great, big buffoon?"

"Oh, dear, now he's gone down the insult path," the figure said. "That's not gonna get you anywhere, Aha."

"*Stop calling me that!*" Ahadi roared. "*My name is Ahadi! Use my full name when you talk to a god such as myself!*"

The figure chuckled. "Oh, boy, Aha, you just don't get it, do you? You see, I've got plans – very big plans – and you aren't in 'em. Sorry, but that's just the way things go. And if I don't *need* you, then what I *do* need… is to *end* you."

"Are you implying what I think you're implying?" asked Ahadi, his claws extending. He was ready for a fight.

"Hey, Aha, guess what?" The figure stepped out from the darkness. "Death came back."

He poked Ahadi with a long, jagged claw.

And instantly, King Ahadi collapsed to the ground, his eyes closed.

Dead.

The figure looked up at the sky. "Guess what, Pride Lands?" he said. "*Kufa inawadia*."

AN: You just might know who the villain is by now. If you're clever enough. Not that all of you *aren't* clever, of course. But you know what I mean. Wow, I sound like Simba today. Anyway, come back tomorrow for *more*! You want to see more of this brilliant villain, right? Sure you do.

Oh, and by the way, one of the main characters is gonna die. I think I might set up a poll or something to see which one you think it is. I haven't done something like that in ages.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: Zazu Makes a Wish

AN: I love this chapter. It starts off as very interesting, and then becomes absolutely heartbreaking. I think I may have let a few tears fall to the floor. No kidding. It's actually pretty heavy stuff. Tissues at the ready!

KaylaDestroyer: That pile of goop from *FernGully*? Hexxus? As in, that awful villain from that equally awful animated movie? No way! I'd never make him a villain! It's one of many clever references to come from the *real* villain around here. He is my complete creation. You'll find out soon enough.

LionKingFactsGuy2: You think Haiba might die? You never know, you might be right. From my poll – thanks for voting, everyone, by the way – the majority of you seem to think that. But keep an open mind. It could be anyone...

Chapter Three: Zazu Makes a Wish

Simba quickly snapped out of the trance. "Whoa…" he said, putting a paw to his temple. "That was a little weird."

"What happened?" Nala asked. "Are you okay, Simba?"

"Of course I am," Simba replied with a smile, before dashing off. "Come on. We'd better get to the water hole."

Nala and Haiba shrugged at each other before following him.

When Simba, Nala and Haiba got to the water hole, they were surprised at who they saw lying face down in the water.

"Zazu?" Simba exclaimed, staring down at the smallish hornbill. He looked dead. But that couldn't be true.

Could it?

There's only one way to find out, Simba thought, reaching with a paw into the water and pulling Zazu out, dropping him down to the safety of the ground. "Zazu, what happened? Are you okay?"

"What the heck was he doing lying in the water?" Nala asked, looking confusedly from Simba to Zazu. "Isn't he supposed to be the smart one?"

Simba shrugged. "I don't know, maybe he knocked himself out while learning how to swim." He looked down at Zazu. "Come on, Zazu," he said, hitting him on the chest with a paw. "You're not dead. Get up."

Zazu let out a loud gasp, his eyes snapping open. He screamed at the top of his voice, eyes wide with horror. "Oh, no! Great heavens! What happened?" He saw Simba, and became surprised at once. "S-Simba?" he said, sounding a little confused. As if he didn't know where he was. "What are *you* doing here?"

"I just saved your life, Zazu," Simba told him. "You were lying in the water. If it wasn't for me, then you would've drowned."

"Water? Drowned?" Zazu sat up, putting a wing to his head. "I don't know what's wrong with me this morning. One minute I was observing the elephant population, and the next—"

"—You were taking a drink – while asleep," finished Haiba, a little smile on his face. His eyes glowed red for a fraction of a second.

Zazu shook his head, trying to determine whether he had just seen Haiba's eyes change colour. But he quickly dismissed that thought, presuming this was just some kind of mental side effect from almost drowning to death.

"I don't understand," Nala said, taking a step towards Zazu. "How could you just suddenly fall into the water hole?"

"Exactly my point, young Nala," replied Zazu. "I'm usually a very careful little bird. In fact, I'm *always* a very careful little bird! It's almost as if someone *else* did this to me. Like a murder attempt." A worried look crossed his face. "Oh, dear. That would be simply atrocious."

"So… wait a minute." Simba waved a paw in the air, shaking his head. "You're saying that one minute you were just doing your job—"

"—And then I woke up to see you," Zazu finished. "Either I started sleep-flying, or someone *dragged* me into the water hole."

"But who would do such an awful thing?" Nala wondered, actually feeling rather sorry for Zazu. Okay, so at first, Nala hated Zazu and everything he stood for. Then a little while later she just disliked him slightly. But now she actually kind of liked him. He didn't deserve this. Not at all.

"I'm not sure," Simba replied, before turning to Haiba. "What do you think?"

Haiba shrugged. "How would I know? I'm not an expert on hornbills getting dragged into water holes. Makes you wish the Grand Lands would teach you about things like that. It's certainly one big mystery."

Simba turned away – not noticing that Haiba's eyes were glowing red behind his back – and looked down at Zazu with sympathy. "Don't worry, Zazu. We'll take care of this," he assured the rather traumatised hornbill. Simba had never seen him look so shaky before.

"I'm doomed!" Zazu cried, collapsing to his back. "Someone's trying to murder me and the only people I can call on for help are three inept cubs! Father would be ashamed of me!"

"Hey!" Simba cried angrily. "I know what 'inept' means, Zazu – and that's something we're not. You know we can help you. We've done it about eight thousand times before!"

"Your extreme exaggeration astounds me, young master," Zazu responded. "I'm still not convinced. Do elaborate further on how you are going to assist me. If my parents were still alive, then they would disown me."

"You talk about your parents a lot," Nala noticed, a curious look crossing her face. "Why is that, Zazu?"

None of them knew anything about Zazu's past. They had to admit, it was very mysterious of him. All the time he was blabbing about other people and what they should do – but he never ever talked about himself, aside from the occasional sentence slip. It was as if he had something to hide.

"It's nothing that would interest – or entertain – cubs like you," Zazu replied. "Now, please, leave me. I need some quiet thinking time."

"We're not leaving until we get some answers," Simba stated, staring down hard at Zazu. "Come on, Zazu. I think it's about time you told the truth. Just what happened to your parents? You never talk about it. Not even to my dad – and he's like your best friend."

"What do you think happened to them?" Zazu said flatly. "They died. Both of them. First it was my mother. She developed some kind of… infection and died a short while later. I was barely six months old when it happened."

"You mentioned her a while back," Nala remembered. "Her name was… Zuzu, I think."

Zazu nodded. "That was her."

"By the way you said about her, it sounded like she was still alive," Nala said.

Zazu winced, trying to hide the fact that he was close to tears. He hated talking about his family – and how every single one of them had perished. "I lied," he admitted. "I just made it sound like she was still alive. But no. All of them are gone."

"Your father," said Simba. "Out of your family, you talk about him the most. I'm guessing he means a lot to you, or something like that."

"After my mother died, he was the only one left to look after me," Zazu explained. "I thought it would be… okay – as long as nothing else bad happened." He frown crossed his beak. "But I was wrong."

"What happened?" Simba asked.

Zazu stared at Simba and Nala, noticing their intrigued looks. He'd never told anyone before. It was too horrible. Too awful.

But maybe, it was time to finally tell the tale. "You're not going to like it," Zazu warned them. "But I'll tell you."

Simba and Nala sat on the ground and listen intently, not noticing that Haiba was standing right behind them, an evil grin on his face, eyes glowing red...

Zazu didn't know what to do. Life was so horrible right now. The world was cruel. The world was wicked. It was his father alone who he could trust in this whole kingdom.

The pride had completely deteriorated into a starving, dehydrated mess. Thanks to King Ahadi, he had exhausted every single lion and lioness in the kingdom. He had already killed one of his mates, and it wouldn't be long before the other one suffered a similar fate. Zazu had overheard that all Ahadi really wanted was just another son. He was always listening in on things that he shouldn't. One day he feared that it would be the death of him.

But that didn't stop him from doing it anyway.

Zazu looked up at the full moon. It was late at night. He was just waiting for his father. He didn't know where he'd gotten to. He'd been gone for hours now. Maybe he wouldn't come back at all…

"*Son?*"

Zazu whipped round at the sound of his father's voice. "*Dad?*" *he said, in his youngish, squeaky sounding voice. Being only a year old, he couldn't really help how he sounded.* "*What is it, Dad?*"

Zazu's father looked much like Zazu did – just a little bit older. "*Son,*" *he spoke softly, walking along the edge of the water hole – which had since been completely drained of all water – and put a comforting wing around his son's shoulder.* "*I'm afraid I have to go.*"

"*Go?*" *Zazu quickly became confused.* "*Go where?*"

"*To the King,*" *Zazu's father said. Fear was evident in his voice. Zazu had never seen his father scared until now. That alone sent a chill through his body. His blood ran cold. That told him one thing.*

Something was very wrong.

"*W-why?*" *Zazu asked, failing to understand.* "*What does the King want from you? I thought you didn't like him. You said he was an 'unintelligent individual with no common sense'.*"

A frown formed on his father's beak. "*Zazu… the King thinks that I'm not good enough for the pride. And for that, he wants to…*" *Zazu's father hesitated.* "*He wants to kill me.*"

Zazu gasped in horror. He was smart enough to know that when the King wanted someone dead, then he would make sure of it. His father didn't need to soften this by saying that the King was 'sending him away' or something like that. He was old enough to understand issues like death.

"*Dad, no—*"

"*It's okay,*" *Zazu's father interrupted, hugging his son closer.* "*But there's nothing… I can't do anything about it. If I ran away, then I'd be abandoning you. And that's simply something I'm not going to do. I'm going to face my punishment.*"

"*But th-that's abandoning me anyway,*" *Zazu stuttered, tears in his eyes.* "*You c-can't just let yourself d-die. There must be something we can—*"

"*Believe me, Zazu, I've tried,*" *Zazu's father told him.* "*But it's complicated. If there was any way out, then I would take it. But there isn't.*"

"*But… what happens to me?*" *Zazu wondered, looking up at his father. Would he have to fend for himself all alone?*

"*Zazu…*" *His father managed a smile.* "*Did you really think that I would leave you all on your own? I took care of it. That friend of yours – Mufasa – is going to look after you.*"

"*But… he's King Ahadi's… son,*" *said Zazu, looking down at the ground. He didn't know if the King would like that.*

"*I know, Zazu,*" *his father agreed.* "*But it's simply the best I could do. I know it's going to be hard, and I know for a while that it'll seem scary, but… I have faith in you. One day – because of you – things will get better. I promise.*"

"*Really?*" *asked Zazu.*

His father simply smiled. "*Have I ever let you down before, son?*"

Zazu just stared at his father, before slowly shaking his head.

Zazu's father looked around, the smile on his beak turning into a frown. "*Son… I have to go now.*" *He then turned Zazu around to face him.* "*But just remember one thing: I'll always be with you, even if you can't see me.*"

"*Dad—*" *Zazu began, but it was too late. His father had already taken to the skies, towards Pride Rock.*

Towards his inevitable death.

It was then that Zazu started to cry. He sniffled, wiping tears from his eyes with his wings. "*No… I don't want you to die… Please… I'd do anything just to save you...*"

"*Did someone say 'anything'?*" *said a voice from behind Zazu.*

Zazu turned around, and was terrified to find two blinking red eyes staring back at him. He couldn't tell if these eyes belonged to a body or not. If they were, then the darkness was obscuring whoever this person – or thing – was.

"*Who… who are you?*" *Zazu asked, cautiously stepping backwards.*

"*You know what, Zazu, you cute little hornbill? I would tell ya, but then that would just spoil all of the fun, now, wouldn't it? You see, I like surprises. I hate spoilers. Hate, hate,* hate *them. Don't you?*"

Zazu didn't answer. All that could be heard was his loud, heavy breathing. He was far too terrified to say anything.

"*You see, Zazu, I couldn't help but overhear your little cry for help. Your brave daddio is about to bite the dust, no thanks to King Ahadi – but I can rectify that.*"

"*You mean that…*" *Zazu slowly began to realise.* "*That you can save my dad from being killed by the King?*"

Zazu could have sworn he saw the figure in the darkness smile. Either that or his imagination was acting up. "*Of course I can, you loveable little scamp, you,*" *the mysterious figure replied.* "*Just wish for it, and I can make your dreams come true. I once knew a person who believed that if you wish upon a star, then all of you dreams will come true. Okay, she's dead now, so it's a pretty stupid message. Unless, of course, you happen to know me.*"

"*Then… then I wish that my father wasn't killed by King Ahadi,*" *Zazu said, hoping with every inch of his being that his wish would come true.*

"*You've got yourself a deal, Z,*" *said the figure.* "*I'm gonna fix that for ya right now.*"

A faint whooshing sound was heard, and then suddenly Zazu found his father standing right next to the shadow that obscured the figure. "*Dad?*"

"*Zazu?*" *Zazu's father quickly became confused.* "*What on earth has happened?*"

"*Hey, lookie here,*" *said the figure, chuckling.* "*It's your dad! Now, Zazu, I am going to make your wish come true.*"

Zazu saw a law, jagged claw reach out from the darkness. It poked his father on the side.

The result was instantaneous. Zazu's father let out a loud gasp, and then collapsed to the ground, his eyes wide open.

He was dead.

"*There we go,*" *the figure said.*

Zazu quickly leapt to his father's side. "*Dad?*" *he said, trying to get some kind of response out of him.*

But there wasn't one.

"*Dad?*" *Sadness quickly turning into anger, he looked up at the figure.* "*What did you do?*"

"*What did* I *do?*" *said the figure, confused.* "*It's what* you *did, Zazu. You said 'I wish my father wasn't killed by King Ahadi.' Well, he wasn't. He got killed by* me *instead. Happy, now?*"

"*But… but…*" *Zazu didn't know what to say.*

"*Looks like our business is concluded. Nice meeting ya, Z. Have fun living with the guilt that you just killed your father. I'm sure it'll be a blast. Bye, now!*"

And just like that, the red eyes disappeared.

Zazu looked down at his father's dead corpse, and then burst into tears. "*Dad… I'm so sorry…*"

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: The Menacing Imposter

Chapter Four: The Menacing Imposter

Zazu's shoulders were hung low, his wings sliding out across the ground. He had tears in his eyes upon finishing his rather disturbing tale. "It was the worst moment of my life," he said. "And I've never been able to forgive myself. I killed my own father. My own flesh and blood."

"Zazu…" Simba began. "It wasn't your fault. Someone – or some*thing* – caused your father to die. And, if you look at it, he was going to die anyway."

"I know," Zazu agreed, closing his eyes in shame. "But if I hadn't wished for King Ahadi not to kill him, then his death wouldn't be on my poor, pitiful conscience. It would have been someone else's fault."

"So just who do you think that person was?" Simba asked, a curious look on his face.

This certainly was a mystery. A really big mystery. But the problem was that Simba liked mysteries. There was a lot about his family history that he had no knowledge about. His parents were very secretive about things like that. However, one day, he knew that he would find out the answers.

Zazu shook his head. "I'm afraid I don't know, young master," he replied honestly. "He just… appeared to me. As if he was some kind of demented guardian angel. That's what I first thought. I thought he had come to help me. To try and set things right. But, of course, I was wrong. I used to be very foolish when I was a child. I blame your father, Simba. He used to be quite like you – only a little more 'under control', so to speak. Still, at least he became a decent king – with a little help from myself."

"But I don't understand," said Simba, fiddling with his tuft – what he always did when thinking. "Just what did the guy want? What was he going to get from killing your dad? And why is he in all those strange visions I keep having?"

"Wait, you've seen this guy before?" Nala asked, quickly turning to Simba. "Why didn't you say so?"

"I didn't know until after Zazu told me the story," Simba replied. "So it's the same guy who talked to Ahadi. It's the same guy who *killed* Ahadi. And it's the same guy who killed your dad."

"If I ever saw that creature again, then I know what I'd do," Zazu began to confess. "I'd ask him to let me switch places with my father. So he would be alive and I would die instead. I just feel like I could have done something more to save him. If he could see me now, then I'd be a failure in his eyes."

"I'm sorry, Zazu," said Nala.

"*I'm sorry, Zazu*," said a cruel, mimicking voice from behind the two cubs.

Simba and Nala turned around slowly, recognising the voice instantly, even though it was cruel and mimicking. They recognised it very, very well – because it was a voice they had heard so many times.

It was Haiba.

But with a significant difference. He had a wide, unpleasant, cruel grin on his face. He had glowing red eyes. And he looked like… pure evil.

"Haiba?" Simba's eyes widened in horror. "What the heck's happened to your eyes? I think someone's been staring at the sun for too long. You've completely burnt them from the inside out!"

"Uh, Simba, I don't think he's been looking at the sun for too long," said Nala, cautiously taking a step forwards. "Haiba? Are you in there?"

"I would like to say yes," Haiba replied in his normal voice. But his eyes were still glowing red, giving him an air of scariness that sent a chill up the cubs' spines. "But unfortunately the answer is no."

"Who are you?" Simba demanded, staring hard at whatever had replaced Haiba and taken his form. "What have you done with Haiba?"

"I *am* Haiba," he replied. "Just… not in a very conventional sense, you know? I've possessed him. It's a common trick where I come from. Not one of those flashy, stupid Grand Lands tricks. I'm talking magic, here. Very powerful magic, to be exact."

Simba and Nala looked at each other, confused beyond belief. "Who are you?" Simba repeated, sounding very angry with this… *thing* that had taken over Haiba's body.

"Who am I?" he said, putting his forepaws to his chest. "That's actually a brilliant question. No, really, I appreciate your investigative nature. It's – what's the word I'm looking for? – clever, that's it. So, if you really want an answer, then I would direct you to my previous clues. Two words, to be precise: *kufa inawadia*."

Simba gasped upon hearing those two words. He remembered them clearly from a frightening incident that had occurred a while ago – on the night before he had even met Haiba. "I know those words," he realised. "That was before —"

"—You met me," the Haiba imposter finished. "Or… *not* me, if you get what I mean. Sorry, this stuff gets a little confusing sometimes. But hey, what can you do?"

"If you're so powerful, then show yourself," said Nala bravely. "Come on. Let's see what you really look like."

The Haiba imposter chuckled. "Oh, I've been planning on doing this for ages and ages," he said, a smile forming on his face. "You know, no one's ever seen what I actually look like. Not until today, that is. This is one of those special occasions. Sure, people have *talked* to me, but they've never actually *seen* me. Just the red eyes. That's all they need to see just to be scared."

Zazu started to shake with fear, finally realising just who this was. "Oh, no…" he said. "It's… it's… it's *you*!"

"That's right, baby!" the imposter exclaimed, before opening his mouth wide.

A thick, black mist began to explode from Haiba's mouth, causing a strange mix between the sound of hissing and vomiting. The red colour in Haiba's eyes slowly began to drain away, until they returned to their usual blue colour.

The black mist stopped firing out of Haiba's mouth, and he collapsed to the ground, unconscious.

Simba, Nala and Zazu looked on – both in horror and amazement – as the black mist began to form some kind of shape.

The mist hissed as it formed the shape of what appeared to be that of a lion. *What the…?* Simba exclaimed, his mouth wide open.

The mist – now in the perfect proportional shape of a lion – began to fade away, revealing grey fur. The greyest grey that anyone had ever seen. One look at it and you would feel instantly depressed.

The mist disappeared to reveal a sleek, black mane. The blackest black that anyone would ever witness. One look at it and you would feel like weeping for hours.

The mist finally dissipated, to reveal a face with crimson eyes, and sharp, menacing, vampire-like teeth. One look at them and you would feel like committing suicide.

Simba, Nala and Zazu were more horrified than they ever had been. This was the scariest sight they had ever seen in their lives. The mere sight of this… creature terrified them. Just who was he?

The lion threw his forepaws up in the air – attached to the ends of which were long, sharp, jagged claws – and grinned widely. "Hello, Pride Lands! Death is back!"

AN: Admit it. You were itching for this new villain to show himself, weren't you? Well, now it's happened. Death is here. The best villain of them all. Oh, no!

The excitement can only get better from here, folks. So, keep reviewing – because I love that – and keep voting – because I love that, too. See you tomorrow, when hopefully this cliffhanger might be resolved...

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: Death and His Needs

AN: Ladies and gentlemen, I give you the greatest villain ever created! Okay, maybe that's a little self-glorifying, but he's pretty good, I tell you. Plus, someone's going to die by the end of these next two chapters. Have you voted correctly? Read and find out.

KaylaDestroyer: Yes, I do believe that Death is my greatest creation. He beats Shocker by a hair's breadth. Because he is just so brilliantly evil. You'll see soon enough. I am so proud of myself.

kora22: Best finale ever? You bet it is!

Chapter Five: Death and His Needs

Simba, Nala and Zazu stared at the creature – who had identified himself as Death – with utter confusion and fear. They didn't know where he had come from, nor what he wanted. Only one thing was certain.

Whatever it was, it wasn't good.

"Ah, it's so good to be back in the land of the living," Death said, walking past Haiba's unconscious body and towards the three cubs. He chuckled. "Even though I'm not technically *alive*, but you get the idea."

Simba and Nala noticed something truly horrifying. As Death walked, with each step he took, he killed all that was beneath him. The grass started to wilt, becoming grey, dull and lifeless. Soon enough, there was a whole trail of grey, dead grass behind this horrifying entity.

"What… what are you?" Simba was speechless. He felt totally transfixed to the spot. As if he couldn't move. This… *thing* had injected him with pure fear. He'd never seen something so terrifying before.

"What am I?" Death pointed to himself with a scraggly claw. "Well, I can be a lot of things. Depends on your perception. Some consider me a god, others consider me a merchant of death. Well, you would, what with the name and all. But generally I'm considered the bringer of ultimate destruction and doom – unless you're some jumped-up psycho who thinks I'm the next best thing to sliced bread. But being a lion cub, you don't even know what bread is. That's the problem with travelling all over the world. You don't know what references to make. Anyway, hi, I'm Death, how ya doing?"

Death stuck out a paw, his claws unsheathed, ready for Simba to shake it.

But he just stared at it, not moving a bit. He'd seen what Death did by touching anything living. It was murdered instantly. So the most stupid thing he could do would be to shake him by the paw.

Death could see that Simba wasn't going to make a move. "You gonna leave me hanging?" He smiled, returning his paw to the ground. "Smart move. One touch and you're dead. Cool, isn't it? It's a shame I forgot to mention that to Belle when I met her once in the marketplace. Needless to say, her happy future with the Beast was instantly erased."

"What are you talking about?" Simba asked, staring at Death with wide eyes. "And what do you want from us?"

Death laughed, shaking his head. "It's not a matter of what I want, Simba, you tiny little furball. It's what I *need*. What I crave. Sure, even if I *didn't* need it, I'd probably still do it, but it's in my nature."

Nala stood behind Simba, the mere sight of Death causing her blood to run cold. It was like having all of the nightmares she'd ever experienced combined into one. She wanted to close her eyes. Wanted to block out the horrible sight. But she couldn't. She just couldn't take her eyes off Death.

"You see, certain terms and conditions apply to my further existence," Death began to explain. "As told by You-Know-Who up in the clouds." He pointed to the sky. "You see, I need souls. Souls of good, honest, decent people. Grass just isn't going to cut it. And, to be specific, I need *thirteen* souls – from this exact area. If I get those thirteen souls, then I'm free. Free as a bird. A *dead* bird, but a bird nonetheless. Remind you of something, Zazu?" he said, shooting a sly look at the terrified hornbill on the ground.

"Then your count is up to two already," Simba realised. "You killed Ahadi, and you killed Zazu's father."

"Not quite, junior," replied Death, taking another step forward, killing a few more blades of grass on the ground in the process. "It needs to be at this exact time. My old nemesis – again, You-Know-Who up in the clouds – was very specific. How I hate him so much. I need thirteen souls, otherwise it's back to the same old routine of keeping the dead in check."

He smiled. "Luckily for me, I happen to be an individual of extreme power. I kind of… stand out – which reminds me of a catchy little pop song I heard once. But it means that I can bend the rules. I've been spreading death and destruction throughout the world a hundred times over. And You-Know-Who hasn't been very efficient in stopping me. It's a battle that, one day, he will lose."

"Okay, I'm officially freaked out now," Simba said, taking a few steps backwards. He just wanted to get away from Death right now. Warn everyone. Warn them that they were all about to be murdered by the biggest evil the world had ever seen.

"*Everyone* is freaked out by me, Simba," Death told him. "Aladdin was freaked out, Ariel was freaked out, and so was Mulan. They all are. Unless, of course, you happen to be evil. That's why old Aha thought of me as a friend. But I soon got rid of him – as I'm sure you've seen."

Simba was surprised. "How did you know that?" he exclaimed.

"Because I'm the one that caused it," was Death's response. "I wanted to give you a little taste of the evil that I've caused at your home – before you were even born. Not that I haven't given you a taste of my evil already, that is."

Simba became confused. "What is that supposed to mean?" he asked. "I've never seen you before in my life."

"Fair point," Death agreed. "But who do you think made you grow up so fast? Who do you think made the cave collapse on poor, old Frank? Who brought Hago back from the dead? Who stuck the wild Mambo beasts in that cave? Who stuck you in an alternate universe for a day? Who deliberately placed the psychic pollen by the water hole so you would inhale it? Who created the fancy forest place with the psychopathic frog? Who made sure that bolt of lightning struck Duni right on the head and turned him into Shocker? Who? Who? *Who?*"

Simba's eyes were wide with horror. All these recent problems… They had all been caused by Death! He'd been the root of all of this!

"It was all me, Simba!" Death declared. "I've been laying traps for you all along – ready to bring you to this exact moment! It's brilliant! It's ingenious! Better than when I burned down FernGully! Better than when I crushed the Powerpuff Girls! *Better than ripping the heads off of all those annoying, colourful ponies who don't ever shut the hell up!*"

"So basically you just kill anyone you want," Simba concluded. "Doesn't matter who, or when. You just do it."

"Got it in one, baby!" he exclaimed, pointing to Simba with a claw. "You're the first one to have actual significance. You're something special, Simba. I'd call you a genius if I wasn't standing right here in front of you."

"So what happens if you're free?" Simba dared to ask.

"If I'm free, then all of existence will be thrown entirely out of balance. You-Know-Who up in the clouds will be defeated, and I will rule on high, spreading death and destruction on a diabolical magnitude that hasn't ever been heard of before," Death said, smiling at Simba. "Doesn't that sound like fun? It'll be more exciting than that time where I made Dexter's lab explode. But still, down to business. Any more questions before I tear this whole kingdom apart?"

There was a moment of silence.

Simba was staring into Death's crimson eyes. "How do I stop you?" he finally asked, breaking the eerie silence.

Death simply laughed. "You can't," he replied. "I'm an all-powerful, immortal being, you foolish, tiny thing. Not even Tarzan asked me such a stupid question before I let that leopardess eat him. It's impossible to kill me – I'm already dead."

That was when Simba said one of the bravest things in his life.

"That's not going to stop me from trying."

With that, he walked away, motioning for Nala and Zazu to follow him. They willingly complied.

"You can't prevent this!" Death called after them as they disappeared into the distance. "Your deaths are all inevitable!"

Once they were out of sight, Death frowned. "It was easier to shoot Bambi's mom."

He sighed, and then looked up at the afternoon sky. "That's it. I've had enough of this happy, colourful brightness. It's like living with Snow White. Which reminds me, that damn Queen never thanked me for the poisonous apple recipe. I must destroy her later…"

Death smiled, and then pointed to the sky with a long claw. "Time to dim the lights!" he exclaimed.

A thick, black mist began to emit from his claw, shooting straight up into the sky. Death chuckled, as his evil powers began to do their work.

The mist spread across the clear blue sky, removing all of its brightness and colour. In just a matter of seconds, the afternoon had deteriorated into night. The sun had been replaced by the full moon.

Death laughed evilly at the top of his voice. "I can see why villains do this laughing thing. I like it, it's… it's cleansing."

"Oh… my head feels like the heaviest stone ever…" said a voice from beside Death.

Death turned his head to the side, and saw Haiba slowly standing up. "Hmm." Death frowned. "I should have anticipated that you wouldn't stay down for ever. Not that it matters, of course."

"Huh?" Haiba stared at Death, confused. "Oh, hey. You're the guy that's been messing with my head. You look kind of dead. And your eyes are red. Wow. I just rhymed without even knowing it."

"Time to die!" Death said, before going to poke Haiba with his claws. One touch. That's all it took.

Haiba dodged out of the way. "Yikes!" he cried. "Hey, there's only two people allowed to poke me around here – and they *aren't* you!"

"Come here, you fool!" Death lunged at Haiba, but he jumped to the side, before running away as fast as he could. "Hey! Get back here! It's only the worst pain ever! Just deal with it!"

Death watched as Haiba escaped. A thoughtful look crossed his face, and he put a paw to his chin. "Hmm…" he said, as a plan formed in his head. "I think I know how to deal with this troublesome pride."

Death took a deep breath, held a paw up to his face, and then exhaled, breathing out a small amount of black mist. He caught the mist with his paw, and formed it into a ball. "Try this one on for size," Death said, before throwing the ball of black mist at the ground.

In a black, smoky explosion, a lion holding a long, golden staff appeared.

"Hago!" Death exclaimed, a grin forming on his face. "I've got another job for you – and try not to mess it up this time."

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: In the Dark of the Night

Chapter Six: In the Dark of the Night

Simba, Nala and Zazu were all alarmed to find that the day had suddenly turned into night. "What?" Simba exclaimed, staring up at the darkened sky in confusion.

"It's night," Nala gasped. "But… but how did that happen? It's not possible!"

"I would point the blame firmly in the direction of that putrid creature known as Death," said Zazu, shooting a fearful look at the direction in which they had come from. Not too far away was the awful creature who had murdered his father. Zazu didn't ever think he would see him again.

Not until today, that is.

"Simba, what are we going to do?" Nala asked, a desperate look in her eyes. "He said we couldn't beat him. But that can't be true – *can* it?"

Simba shook his head. "I don't know," he replied honestly. "All I *do* know is that we have to warn everyone. Death's gonna come after us, and before we know it he'll be trying to kill everyone else, too."

"We're doomed," Zazu said, looking down at the ground. "This is it. The end of everything. The whole kingdom is dead."

"Zazu, this is no time for giving up," Simba told him. "We've got to fight if we stand any chance of surviving. He has to have some weakness. *Everybody* has a weakness."

"Unless you're invincible," Zazu added. "Which perfectly sums that horrible, foul creature up. He killed my father, and now he's going to kill me – along with every other poor soul in this kingdom."

"Look, let's just get back to Pride Rock," said Simba, breaking into a light run. "It's not over yet."

"No," Zazu said under his breath. "But it soon will be."

"I'm back!" Hago cried, ecstatic. "Yes! Yes, yes, yes!" He started hopping up and down, unable to contain his excitement.

"Calm down, my eager little psychopath," said Death, standing in front of Hago. "Like I said – I've got an important job for you to do."

Hago glanced at Death. "You?" he exclaimed in surprise. "Since when did *you* show your face on this earth?"

"Excuse me, but I have a name," Death said, frowning at Hago. "I'd be very pleased if you would *use* it. After all, I did bring you back from the dead – *again*."

"Death, I offer my humblest of thanks for your gratitude," Hago said, bowing his head in respect.

Death stared at him, an unimpressed look on his face. "Uh-huh. Now, if you're done grovelling, then I'd like you to do me a favour."

"Anything, anything!" Hago exclaimed, taking a step towards Death. "Your wish is my command, master!"

Death slapped a paw to his face. *I should have brought someone else back,* he thought. *I'm already tired of Hago sucking up to me. But it doesn't matter. Soon a* lot *of people will be brought here… for the greatest war of them all.*

"Look, just find Simba and Nala. I would like them to be brought here. They shall be the first to die – because they're the only ones who stand a chance of halting this little gig I've got going on here."

"But you're Death," said Hago. "Surely two meddlesome cubs are no match for your greatness?"

"They're special," said Death. "And for cubs, I can actually respect that. You know, it's not something you get very often."

"The question begs why you just didn't kill them straight away," said Hago. "And why have you chosen me for this duty? And how come it's night? According to my calculations, it should be day right about now. Did you eat the sun again, Death?"

"Oh, *come on!*" Death exclaimed furiously, breathing fire out of his mouth. "Pocahontas didn't complain this much *when I*

fed her to some crocodiles!"

"Okay, okay!" Hago backed away, his eyes wide with fear. "I'll do it. I shall bring those two nuisances here straight away."

"And if you *don't*, then there'll be no place in my new Empire of Darkness for you!" Death threatened.

As Hago walked away, Death sunk to the ground, a frown on his face. "This is just ridiculous! I've never seen such an incompetent villain! I should have brought in Shere Khan – he was so much more delightful in his evil deeds. Good thing I helped him murder that stupid man-cub with the funny haircut."

"Dad!" Simba cried, running over to his father.

Mufasa, Sarabi, Sarafina, the rest of the lionesses and their cubs were all gathered below Pride Rock, staring with confusion at the night sky that had suddenly enveloped the day.

"Simba!" Mufasa said in surprise, looking down at his son. "Where have you been?"

"The better question would be: why the heck is it night?" Sarafina cut in. "Last time I checked, there hasn't been an eclipse in years."

"Dad, we've got a problem," Simba said, the utmost sense of urgency in his voice. "Death came back!"

All eyes were on Simba. "*What?*" everyone exclaimed at the same time.

"Sire, let me explain," said Zazu, holding up a wing. "You see, some kind of… unearthly being has blinked into existence from out of nowhere, and he's planning on taking all of our souls." The explanation wasn't the best, but it would have to do for now.

"This is absurd!" Sarabi exclaimed, outraged by the mere mention of such ridiculous things. "Zazu, how could you believe such an outlandish tale?"

"I witnessed it myself," Zazu told the Queen. "Good heavens, I'm actually sticking up for the cubs. What has become of me?" He shook his head, returning to the subject. "This... being is on his way, my Queen. And he's going to kill us all."

"Unless we do something to stop it, of course," Nala added.

"*I don't think that will be happening anytime soon!*"

Everyone turned their heads upon hearing Hago's voice. He stood in front of the Pride Landers, his magical staff aimed at them. "Long time, no see, everyone!" he said, grinning widely.

"Hago?" Simba became even more confused. "Okay, this is pretty messed up right now."

"Simba!" Hago yelled, his eyes glinting with eagerness. "I would make a big speech about how you killed me last time – but I'm afraid that would be a lie."

It took Simba a few moments to figure out what he meant. But by then, Hago's focus was already on Nala.

"Oh, Princess!" Hago said to Nala. "There's someone I'm *dying* to introduce you to!"

"What are you—"

Nala didn't have any time to finish her sentence. A red beam of light shot out from the end of Hago's staff. It struck Nala in the chest, and she cried out in surprise.

Before anyone even knew it, both she and Hago had disappeared.

"Oh, *no*!" Simba cried, a worried expression on his face. "*Now* what are we gonna do?"

"Simba!"

"Oh, what now?" Simba growled angrily, before realising that Haiba was running towards him. "Oh, Haiba, it's you."

"Simba! We've got a problem! Death came back!" Haiba said quickly, prompting Simba to look very unsurprised.

"Yeah, we've been through that part," he said. "But Nala's been kidnapped by Hago, and now that means I've gotta fight

two big meanies!"

"Hago?" Haiba raised an eyebrow. "Wow, the guy just doesn't give up, does he? You'd think he was working for Death or something."

"Death…" Simba thought for a second. "That's it!"

"That's what?" Haiba asked.

"Death!" Simba exclaimed. "Hago's working for him! He must have… brought him back again!"

"'Again'?" Haiba repeated.

"Yeah, he's the reason Hago got brought back. It was Death," Simba explained. "Plus a whole lot of other things that I'll tell you about later. But first, we've gotta find Nala."

"Then they'd be at the water hole," Haiba told him. "That's where Death was."

"Come on." Simba ran off.

Mufasa opened his mouth. "Simba, wait—" But it was too late. He and Haiba were both gone. "Sarabi, remind me to teach our son about properly explaining things to his parents."

"Oh, I've had more than enough of this!" Zazu exclaimed angrily. "Never mind about your parenting techniques, sire – your son is actually trying to help! Are you honestly so incompetent that you can't even listen to your own cub properly?"

Mufasa and Sarabi glared at Zazu angrily.

He looked down at the ground sheepishly. "Oh, I am *so* fired…"

"Get off me!" Nala yelled furiously, trying to slash at Hago with her claws.

But he just threw her to the ground, where she landed right in front of the one person she never wanted to see ever again. "Hello, Nala, my sweet little buttercup," Death said, smiling down at her. "How you doing?"

Nala screamed in terror, jumping to her paws and backing away, only to bump right into Hago. "You're not going anywhere," said Hago coldly.

Nala lashed out with her claws, slashing Hago across the chest. He cried out in both pain and anger, before whacking Nala across the face with his staff. "Impudent little brat!" he growled loudly.

Nala fell onto her back, grunting in pain. When she opened her eyes, she found Death's red ones glaring back at her.

"I would say that I'm sorry for what I'm about to do," Death told her, "but the truth is: I'm not. It's actually kinda fun!"

With that, he poked Nala in the chest with one of his long claws.

Nala gasped loudly, as the most horrible pain anyone could ever imagine rocked through her body.

The pain of her soul being sucked right out of her.

It felt like it lasted for ever, when in reality it was over within a few seconds. Nala closed her eyes, and she collapsed to the ground.

"One down, twelve to go," Death said with a smile.

"This is excellent!" Hago exclaimed, also smiling. "Now that one of my greatest enemies is dead, taking care of the next one shouldn't be too much of a problem! It won't be long before we're ruling this entire world together!"

He laughed evilly at the top of his voice – like he always did.

But Death, however, was not impressed. "Yeah. About that. I'm afraid this world isn't big enough for the two of us, Hago. I'm gonna have to let you go."

Hago couldn't believe what he was hearing. "*What?*" he exclaimed, eyes widening in horror. "But you said you'd let me live! You said I would become part of your Empire of Darkness!"

Death shrugged. "I lied."

Before Hago could say anything else, Death poked him in the chest.

Hago gasped loudly, and died, in the same way as Nala had.

"Like taking candy from a baby – something I've done several times," Death said, looking down at Hago's body. He wiped sweat from his brow. "Phew! I haven't worked this hard since I eradicated the whole kingdom of Atlantis!"

He smiled, as Hago's body slowly faded away, as if he had never been there. "Back into the darkness for you, my friend."

With that, Death walked along the water hole, humming a little tune to himself. "*Heigh-ho, heigh-ho, to killing lions I go…*"

As Death walked along, he stuck his claws in the water, enjoying the coldness of it.

Slowly, the water began to change colour.

To red.

When Simba and Haiba arrived at the water hole, Death and Hago were nowhere to be seen. "Where did they go?"

Haiba shrugged. "I don't know. Death was here when I woke up. I figured that he would stay."

"Great. So now he's hiding someplace secret." Simba glanced at the water hole, and his eyes widened in shock at what he saw.

"Whoa…" Haiba said, following Simba's gaze. "Check out the water."

The water had turned completely red. As if this was the site of some kind of ancient satanic ritual.

"It's turned red," Simba said in amazement, taking a step towards the edge. "The water has turned red!"

Haiba scooped up a tiny bit of the liquid with his paw, putting it in his mouth. He swallowed it, and grimaced at the taste. "It's not water, Simba," he said. "It's *blood*."

"Oh, gosh…" Simba exclaimed, backing away from the water hole. "This keeps getting freakier by the minute."

"So what now?" Haiba asked.

"Just keep an eye out for—"

Simba gasped when he spotted the body on the ground.

No. This was just his imagination. Everything was fine. It was perfectly okay.

That wasn't Nala. It was just some other cub that Death had killed. They looked nothing alike. Okay, so their fur was the same colour. And their tails were roughly the same length. And her face shared a very similar resemblance to Nala's. But this was in no way—

"*That's Nala!*" Simba screamed at the top of his voice, racing to her side. He grabbed her body, and shook her frantically. "Nala? Nala, it's me, Simba. Are you okay?"

He got no response. Her body had gone limp. She was completely motionless. Simba could feel that there was absolutely no life left in her body. In a very strange way, she looked eerily peaceful.

But the point still stood firmly.

Nala was dead.

"Nala, wake up!" Simba sniffled, as tears started to well up in his eyes. "Wake up! *Please!*" He started to cry, burying his face in Nala's fur. "*Wake up!*"

Simba continued to sob and cry. He had lost his girlfriend. His best friend. His future queen. She was gone for ever. All her hope, all her potential, and everything she could have been was snatched away in an instant. Simba had lost the single most important person in his life.

Haiba looked down at his deceased friend, then at the ground, tears falling from his own eyes. *No… No… Not you, Nala…*

Death was well on his way to winning.

But for Simba and Haiba, it felt like Death had won already.

AN: I absolutely *adore* Death. I think he's one of the best villains ever. Just the thought that this one guy is behind every single bad thing that's ever happened in all the animated films and TV shows is brilliant. Shear brilliance.

Also, I psyched you all out. None of you thought Nala was going to die. Shock cliffhanger, huh? I am so happy today. This story has to be one of the best – if not *the* best!

So, what's gonna happen now? Of course, you know how to find out. I'll see you tomorrow, for the final chapter of Series Three...

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: Life or Death

AN: Okay, I'll admit it, I cried. I'm a big baby. I'm a sucker for stuff like this. This is not the longest chapter I've written, but that doesn't matter. I still think it's the best. Quality over quantity, as a wise man once said. I hope this will reach you emotionally in some way, as do all of my series finales, really. But first, it's time for the lucky reviewers who made the final chapter of the series.

KaylaDestroyer: Yep. Death is hilarious. I absolutely love the idea of him, and what he represents. It's brilliant, brilliant, brilliant! I think I'm *in* love with him. I might just be insane...

LionKingFactsGuy2: He killed all the Disney characters. That's horrible. He killed the Powerpuff Girls. That's despicable. He murdered Nala. That's just downright evil. He killed the ponies. Yeah, he did a good job on that. Let 'em rot.

So, that's it from me. Enjoy the final chapter of Series Three!

Chapter Seven: Life or Death

Death whistled merrily as he walked through a field, killing all of the grass that came into contact with his paws. "This grass should consider itself lucky," he said. "The deaths awaiting the rest of these pathetic fools are going to be far more gruesome in tone. Like when I managed to get Sylvester to finally eat Tweety. Who knew there was so much juice in that small head of his? 'I tawt I taw a puddy tat.' Yes, you did, Tweety. And he bit down on your head and chewed it right off."

Death was ready to give the Pride Lands a big show tonight. His great takeover of the world, and soon enough, all of existence, wasn't going to go unnoticed, that was for sure. Everyone was going to know about this.

And the best part was that no one was going to be able to stop him.

His plan had worked brilliantly. Murdering Nala had completely distracted Simba and Haiba. They would be too overcome with grief in order to try and make any sort of attempt to halt his progress.

Not that he couldn't be stopped anyway, of course.

Nevertheless, those cubs would prove to be extremely irritating if they were still up and about while he was trying to spread darkness and chaos throughout the known universe.

Particularly Simba. There was something about this cub that struck Death as very peculiar. He spoke the truth in what he said: Simba was special. There was no doubt about that. As if You-Know-Who up in the clouds had personally picked this one cub to be the saviour of everything.

But that just sounded silly. Death hadn't heard of such a thing in two thousand years. *There's something wrong with me,* Death thought to himself. *He's just a little, freakish cub. It's always the young ones who are special. I remember that Jim Hawkins kid. Needless to say, I'm glad I made Treasure Planet explode a little bit earlier than it should have done.*

Death giggled. "Oh, I'm so evil!" he exclaimed, as he reached the top of a hill. Looking into the distance, he could see Pride Rock. "Well, what do you know?" Death said, as a smile began to form on his face. "If it isn't the national landmark of the Pride Lands. I must say, it's a bit more impressive than the flashy show-off nature of other places. I'd even say it beats Hawaii. Note to self: kill Stitch before he meets that stupid Lilo girl."

Death walked down the hill, towards Pride Rock. It was time to set things in motion. His plan was going to be put into action. "Soon everyone will die, and this whole kingdom will crumble into dust. No, not crumble – *burn*. It's so much more impressive. I like it when things are on fire. Quasimodo had the right idea when he turned Notre Dame into a fiery blaze. Shame he wasn't a villain, otherwise I just might have let him dodge that sword attack by Frollo." He shrugged. "Oh, well. Can't win 'em all."

Death narrowed his eyes, straining to see if there was anyone close to the famous rock structure. "Come on, you simpletons. Where are you?" he asked, as he got closer and closer. "There's no use hiding from your inevitable deaths. You cannot kill what is death itself." He smiled. "Ooh, that sounded quite philosophical! This is *such* an exciting day!"

Death reached Pride Rock, and that was when he stopped walking. A cruel smile spread across his bony face, and his red eyes seemed to glow, like lights in the darkness.

"Time to die, Pride Landers."

"Zazu, you had better explain yourself," Mufasa said to his royal advisor, frowning crossly at him. "Why have you brought us all the way out here?"

Zazu had just about managed to convince the pride to relocate away from Pride Rock, and now they were stuck in the middle of a field just on the outskirts of the kingdom. He doubted they believed his story, though.

"For *your* safety, sire," Zazu replied, frowning at the King. He'd had quite enough of everyone's incompetence.

He hated to admit it, but he agreed wholeheartedly with Simba. The cub was right. They had to warn the pride, and get them as far away from Death as possible. It was about time that he stood up for something. "There is an immortal, all-powerful demon on the loose, and I'd suggest that we get as far away from him as possible."

"Zazu, if someone – or some*thing* – is planning on attacking the kingdom, then the first thing we are going to do is *not* run away," Mufasa responded. "If we have to fight to survive, then so be it."

"I would not advise such a thing, sire," Zazu argued. "You cannot kill what is death itself. Sorry to get philosophical, but it's true. What I *would* advise is to—"

"Zazu, because of your misconduct, you are in no position whatsoever to advise *any* of us on what to do," Mufasa interrupted, staring at Zazu with a stern look in his eyes. "As far as I'm concerned, you are relieved from your duties."

There was a tense moment of silence.

"Then that's fine by me," Zazu finally said, folding his wings. "Go ahead and fight. Go ahead and lose. Go ahead and get yourselves horribly killed. As far as *I'm* concerned, you can do whatever it is you please. Good day to you all."

With that, Zazu took to the skies. That was it. He'd tried and tried to explain to the pride that they were in serious danger, and that they should get away, but they weren't having any of it. They refused to listen, and now they would pay the price for it. They would suffer the consequences, and eventually they would die. Each and every single one of them. They would all perish horrifically, and Death would spread death and destruction wherever he wished.

That was what made Zazu stop flying.

He gasped as he crashed into a nearby bush. "Oh, no!" he cried, before emerging from the bush. "If Death kills thirteen members of the pride, then soon *everything* will die! I couldn't possibly *bear* to live in such a world! I've… I've… I have to find Simba. He's the only one who stands a chance of doing anything." He rolled his eyes. "I never knew the King could be so incompetent."

Zazu flew off again, this time heading for the water hole. Chances were that was where Simba, Nala and Haiba would be. Those three cubs were the kingdom's only hope right now. Maybe – if they were the luckiest cubs in existence – they might just be able to kill Death itself.

"Oh, for crying out loud!" Death yelled, breathing a few licks of flame out of his mouth. "Empty! Completely empty!"

When Death walked into the den, he immediately realised that it was devoid of life. No lions. No lionesses. No *ants*. Nothing.

"Come on!" Death shouted, jumping up and down in anger. "Couldn't you just stay here and quietly await your fates? Everyone has to be so difficult! I'm Death, for Pete's sake! I've made Dumbo crash! I made that stupid fox hate the equally stupid hound! I've thrown that freaky aardvark with the glasses off a cliff! *Why can't I kill this stupid pride?* Why? *Why?* Why…?"

Death collapsed to the ground, a defeated look on his face. "What am I gonna do?" He stood up, wiping a paw over his face, struggling to think. "Oh, Huey, Dewey, Louie…"

His red eyes suddenly lit up – quite literally, actually. "Aha!" he exclaimed, a grin appearing on his face. "I know *just* what to do! Let's have a little search through my back catalogue!"

Death took a deep breath, and then exhaled, letting a thick cloud of black mist escape his throat.

It expanded in size, until it was more or less the same size as that of a large boulder. "Now, let's see…"

Death stuck his paw into the cloud. His entire foreleg disappeared inside of it, as if it were much bigger on the inside. "Hmm…" He began to fish around the inside of the cloud, trying to search for something.

He then grabbed hold of something, and then pulled out a funny-looking snake. Death frowned apologetically at it. "Uh, sorry, Kaa, I'm looking for someone else. Don't mind me. But keep those eyes spinning. Does wonders for the kids."

He shoved the snake back inside the cloud, before continuing to search. "Come on, you must be in here somewhere…"

Death then grabbed hold of something else, and was surprised when he pulled out a pirate captain. "I say, what is the meaning of this?" the pirate captain roared.

"Captain Hook!" Death exclaimed, a cheery grin on his face. "I must say, it's been a while since I've seen you! How's that Peter Pan kid doing?"

Captain Hook looked back into the cloud. "Mr Smee, prepare the cannonballs!" he ordered.

"Yikes!" Death threw Captain Hook back into the cloud. He covered his face with his paws, as a sudden explosion shot out from the cloud, showering Death with smoke and debris. "Jeez, you'd think these people would be a little nicer to the guy who influenced them in the first placed." He sighed. "Oh, well…"

Reaching back into the cloud, Death pulled out another person. "*Off with his head!*" the person roared at the top of her voice.

"No." Death shoved the person back inside, before pulling out another.

"*Get those puppies!*"

"Nope."

"*… Poor unfortunate souls!*"

"I don't think so."

"*Creeper!*"

"Oh, come on, you're just a guy in a mask. Gimme something better."

"*I'll get you next time, Gadget!*"

"*Smithers, release the hounds…*"

"*Prepare for trouble!*"

"*And make it double!*"

Death couldn't take anymore. "*That's it!*" he roared, breathing so much fire out of his mouth that the cloud was instantly eradicated. "If there aren't any useful villains around, then I'm going to make one of my own! Now, let's see…"

Death breathed a small ball of black mist into his paw. "We'll have a pawful of Rasputin…" He breathed more mist into his other paw. "A dash of Gaston…" He formed the two balls of mist into one big ball. "And just a *hint* of Scar."

Death clapped his paws together. The large ball of mist exploded, and Death stumbled backwards, crashing against the wall of the den

There was a thick cloud of acrid smoke in the middle of the den. It hissed with pure evil.

Death stood up, and watched as it cleared away, to reveal his new creation.

A large, bulky, tall lion stood proud in the centre of the den. Its muscles bulged from its chest, and its red eyes darted left and right. If anyone saw this thing walking towards them, then they would run a mile.

Death smiled. "There we go," he said. "Magic, strength and a psychopathic mind. A recipe for disaster. And a *good* disaster, too. I think I'll name you… Chaos. Goes well with my name. Like a sort of… companion. Yeah, that's it. What do you think?"

The lion snapped its neck in Death's direction. "I like the sound of that," he said, in a rather intelligent voice. "What is your command, my master?"

"Master?" Death chuckled. "Please, call me Death. It sounds so much more interesting. Technically, you should call me

Dad, but I'm not the parenting type. Let's just take this one step at a time, huh?"

"Then what would you like me to do… Death?" Chaos asked, his breathing loud and heavy. His big chest slowly expanded inwards and outwards. He looked as if he had been composed of pure strength. Death had created something that would be truly unstoppable.

Not unlike himself.

"Okay, this is what I'd like you to do," Death began to explain, taking a step towards his evil creation. "I've already given you a certain input on the problems I'm facing right now, so you should be familiar with Simba. Am I right?"

Chaos stared straight ahead, and began to rattle off information at an extremely quick pace. "Simba – Prince of the Pride Lands – betrothed to Princess Nala – golden-brown fur – auburn eyes – enjoys dangerous adventures – prone to hypnosis – ticklish behind the left ear—"

Death raised a paw for him to stop. "Good, I get it," he interrupted. "Now, here's what you're going to do: you're going to keep Simba away from the rest of the pride, and pound his tiny little body into the ground. Understand?"

"Yes, Death." Chaos saluted him. "I will destroy Prince Simba, and his bones shall be crushed into dust."

Death shook his head, smiling. "No, no, no, no, you didn't hear me correctly. I don't want you to *destroy* him. Oh, no, no, no. I want you to *hurt* him. Rough him up. *Injure* him. That means he'll be weak. That means you can bring him to me, and then *I* will kill him. *Now* am I making myself clear?"

"Perfectly, Death," Chaos replied. "I will hurt him sufficiently enough, and then he shall be brought to you. I will take care of it. Don't you worry a single bit."

"Good." Death then walked out of the den, only to be provided with another question from Chaos.

"Um, Death, what will *you* be doing?" he asked.

Death turned around. "The same thing I do every night, Chaos: try to take over the world."

And just like that, he was gone.

"Simba!" Zazu almost crashed into the ground because of how relieved he was to find him. "I have the most *dreadful* thing to—"

He stopped midsentence when he saw Simba hunched over the motionless body on the ground. *Good grief,* Zazu thought. *That's not… No, it can't be…*

As Zazu walked across the ground, he was horrified to find that the lifeless body belonged to Nala. "Oh, no…" he whispered under his breath, his head hanging low.

Simba kept sobbing into the fur of his dead girlfriend. His heart was broken.

No. It was more than that. His heart had been *torn apart*. His one true love had been cruelly stolen from him by his mortal enemy.

Death.

He was the worst of them all. Every single villainous creature in existence had been influenced by his horrible ways. Every time something bad happened, it was always because of him.

He was a murderer.

He was a maniac.

He was a *monster*.

And he vowed, as he cried into Nala's body, that Death would pay for his actions.

Tonight.

Simba would have his revenge. He would do what everyone else wouldn't – *couldn't* – do. He would avenge Nala, and he

would save the whole world. He would save everything and everyone.

Tonight, he would do the impossible.

He was going to kill Death.

"Simba…"

Zazu didn't know what to say. Just seeing Nala's dead body lying on the ground gave him this horrible sense of dread in the pit of his stomach. Just like when his father had been murdered. Maybe Death gave everyone the same feeling, when someone close to them had been killed by him.

"I…"

"You don't need to say anything," Simba said coldly, rising to his paws, a determined look on his face. He'd never been angrier. He'd never been more upset. He'd never been more determined in his life. "I know what I have to do."

He turned around to face Haiba and Zazu. "I'm going to kill Death."

"Simba…" Haiba didn't really know where to begin. "Don't you think that killing Death is…" He let out a long sigh. "Impossible?"

"*Nothing's* impossible," Simba stated. "It's just very unlikely. And if we die, then fine, we die. But if Nala taught me one thing – just one thing – then it was to never ever give up. She'd want us to keep trying."

Haiba opened his mouth to argue, but then was struck with a sudden realisation.

So what?

Simba was talking complete and utter sense. They might as well try. If they didn't, then they were dead anyway. If they were going to go down, then they were going to go down fighting. Nothing really mattered right now. He would fight. Fight for Nala. Fight for his mother. Fight for everyone.

"Okay," Haiba finally said, sharing Simba's determined look. "I'm with you – to the end. So… what's the plan?"

"Simple: find Death, and kill him," Simba replied.

Zazu raised a wing. "Uh, excuse me, young master, but how do you propose that we do such a thing?"

"Well, in the olden days you'd use a wooden stake to kill a vampire," said Haiba. "And they weren't technically *alive*. Think the same trick would work with Death?"

"I was thinking of something else," Simba told them both. He looked lost in thought. "But I've gotta do this on my own."

"Then just what are we supposed to do?" Haiba asked.

"*Dying would be a good start!*"

The three of them turned their heads, and found themselves staring at a huge, bulky lion, muscles bulging with sheer power and strength. "Hi, kids," he said. "I'm Chaos."

He grinned at them, revealing a row of extremely sharp teeth. They looked just perfect for crushing the heads of innocent cubs – or hornbills.

"Why do I think that Death is behind this?" Haiba asked, taking a cautious step backwards. "I mean, the bulging muscles – which look great, by the way – just kind of give it away, don't you think so?"

Chaos snarled, grabbing Haiba with one of his huge paws and holding him up to his face. Haiba made a squeaky, terrified noise.

"*Mommy*."

Chaos chuckled, and began to crush Haiba in his tightening grasp. Simba and Zazu could have sworn they heard the sound of his bones cracking.

"Help… me…" Haiba said, his whole body feeling like it was about to be compressed into total nothingness.

"Let him go!" Simba demanded, taking a brave step towards the hulking creature. "It's me you want!"

Chaos just smiled. "With pleasure," he said, before throwing Haiba into the water hole – which had since been replaced with blood.

Splash! Haiba landed in the blood, and immediately gagged as some of it entered his mouth. *Oh, no…*

Emerging from the blood, he coughed and spluttered, swimming over to the edge. "That is the most disgusting thing ever."

"Simba," Chaos said, his smile widening. "You've caused a lot of trouble for Death. But that doesn't matter, because now *I'm* around to take care of things. Prepare to be squashed!"

Chaos raised one of his humongous paws, and brought it crashing down on top of Simba.

Simba cried out in pain, instantly collapsing to the ground. His whole body shook with immense force, and it felt like he had been pelted with a thousand stones. This was truly the strongest lion he'd ever seen in his life.

But that wouldn't stop him from fighting.

Far from it.

Simba stumbled to his paws, staring Chaos in the eyes. "You're gonna have to do a lot better than that if you want to kill me."

"I don't plan on killing you," Chaos informed him. "I just want to hurt you enough so that you won't be able to stop Death from taking your soul."

Simba smiled. "Thank you for that helpful information," he said, before turning around and walking away. "Now, if you'll excuse me, I'm going to die."

"Get back here, you little brat!" Chaos roared, picking Simba up with one of his paws. "Let's see how you handle this!"

He began to crush Simba, in the same way as he did with Haiba. "I'm gonna crush all of your bones!" Chaos told him. "So that you won't even be able to *think*!"

Simba struggled to break free, but Chaos had an extremely firm grip on his tiny body. He was slowly being squeezed, and it felt like his eyes were going to pop out any second now.

"Let… me… go…"

Chaos just chuckled. "I don't think so, kid," he responded. "I only listen to Death. He's the big boss around here."

Simba groaned and grunted, as his body was squeezed harder and harder. The pain was unbearable. He didn't know how much more he could take…

Chaos then felt a tap on his back. "Huh?"

He turned around to see a set of claws swiping him in the face.

Crying out in pain, Chaos dropped Simba to the ground, releasing him from his lethal grip. "What the hell was…?"

"Tojo, slash him again."

Chaos was met with another slash to the face. His head flopped backwards, and his eyes snapped shut, unconscious.

Tojo turned around to face Tama, a smile on his face. "What do you know? These underdeveloped claws aren't so bad after all!"

Tama patted Tojo on the shoulder. "Good boy." She smiled at Simba. "Bet you're glad to see us, huh?"

Simba was a little surprised to see Tama and Tojo. "What?" He rubbed his eyes, to see if they were really there or not. "Tama? Tojo? How did… How did you get here?"

"It didn't take Tojo too long to figure it out," Tama replied. "I mean, the day suddenly turning into night? There's only one logical explanation for that."

Tama and Tojo both spoke at the same time. "There's something happening at the Pride Lands."

"So, you see, I thought that we should take a look," Tojo explained. "And, of course, there was a big scary monster trying to crush you. If we didn't show up, then I don't know *what* he would have done to you."

"Hey, look, it's Tiny Tojo," Haiba joked, joining Simba by his side.

"You can talk, Prince Cheesy," Tojo retorted. "I just saved your life." He looked at Simba. "So, where's Nala?"

Simba's expression was cold and heartless. "She's dead."

Tama and Tojo watched, shocked, as Simba turned around and walked away.

"*What?*" Tojo exclaimed, eyes wide.

"Wait, where are you going?" Tama asked, confused.

"I've got a date with Death," he replied. "Just wait there. Make sure that big guy doesn't get back up or anything."

"Simba, wait," Haiba said, running after Simba. "What are you going to do? Do you even have a plan?"

"Of course I have a plan," Simba assured him, not even stopping. "Just do as I say and wait here."

Zazu watched Simba walk away, and smiled. "Good luck, young master!" he called after the brave cub, meaning every word that he said.

Now we know who the real *King is around here…*

King Mufasa and the rest of the pride were making their way back towards Pride Rock, ready to fight whoever was trying to take over the kingdom. They weren't just going to give up. They'd faced fights before. Surely one lion couldn't be that much of a—

"Hello, Pride Landers!"

Everyone was surprised when Death suddenly appeared in front of them. His forepaws were raised in the air, and he had a maniacal grin on his face, as if he were already victorious.

"Bet you're surprised to see me! I mean, it's not every day an all-powerful lion appears right in front of you, is it? Allow me to introduce myself. I'm Death, how ya doing?"

He stuck out his paw for the King to shake.

King Mufasa didn't move.

Death rolled his eyes. "Okay, I had a feeling you wouldn't fall for that trick." He shrugged. "Not that it matters, because I can just do *this*!"

He poked Mufasa in the chest with one of his claws. In just a matter of seconds, the King of the Pride Lands was on the ground, eyes snapped shut.

He was dead.

Everyone gasped in horror, backing away from this horrifying creature.

"What have you done?" Sarabi cried, looking down at her fallen mate.

"The same thing I'm going to do to you," Death replied, before poking Sarabi in the chest. "And you." He poked Sarafina in the chest. "And you." He poked a lioness. "And you!" He poked another. "And *you*!"

Death continued poking the remaining lionesses in the chest, until they had all fallen down, dead. "That makes twelve," he realised, smiling.

All that remained of the pride were a dozen terrified cubs. Death grinned, and then screamed at the top of his voice.

The cubs all yelled in terror, running away as fast as they possibly could.

"That's right!" Death called after them. "*Run!* Just like Sonic the Hedgehog! But that didn't help him!"

He giggled to himself. "I love terrorising young people. It's what gets me up in the morning."

"*Death!*"

Death instantly whipped round upon hearing that voice.

"Ah, Simba…" he said, smiling at the brave Prince of the Pride Lands. "Just the cub I wanted to see. The only one worthy of becoming my thirteenth victim."

Simba walked towards Death, ready for the final showdown. This was it. This one encounter would decide whether he would live, or whether he would die.

It would probably be the latter.

"Do you like my work?" Death asked him, gesturing to the bodies that were littered across the ground.

Simba stared at all the bodies. All the lionesses of the pride had been killed. So had Sarafina, Nala's mother. And so had his parents…

They just lay there. Their lives had been stolen.

"Oh, yeah," Simba replied sarcastically. "I just *love* the fact that you've killed everyone I know and love."

Death chuckled. "I thought you'd be a little sadder, if I'm honest. Come on, just a few tears? Please? Do I at least get the chance to say 'boo hoo'?"

"It doesn't matter anymore," Simba told him. "Whatever happens, I'll probably end up dead."

Death shrugged. "Fair point. So you're saying that you give up?"

Simba shrugged, in the same manner as Death had. "That's what I'm saying," he lied. "You've stolen everything from me. My friends. My family. Nala. I've got nothing else to live for. So, go on. Kill me."

Death frowned, staring into Simba's auburn eyes. Trying to figure out whether this was some kind of trick or not.

But it couldn't be – could it? He was Death! No one could stop him! He was invincible! The most powerful being in the world!

"Hmm…" Death raised a claw, still mulling over the possibly consequences in his brain.

"Come on!" Simba demanded, anger blazing in his eyes. "Kill me! Do it! *Kill me!*"

This couldn't be a trick. The kid had just lost his mind. He'd gone insane. He actually wanted to die!

Death grinned evilly, knowing that victory was finally his. "You've made me a very happy guy, Simba! Allow me to grant your wish!"

He poked Simba in the chest with one of his long claws.

What happened next shocked Death to the inner core of his being.

Both Simba and Death experienced what it felt like to die. Simba felt like his soul was being torn out of his body, while Death felt like his whole existence was being burned up from the inside out.

Simba screamed, and so did Death. They were feeling the exact same amount of pain.

And it seemed like it was never going to end.

Death opened his mouth wide, and breathed out a torrent of fire, his eyes glowing a furious red. He screamed and screamed, as the pain intensified. His whole body was being torn apart. Everything he was…

It was *burning*.

Simba screamed, as his soul itself was ripped apart. Everything he was, and everything he would be was being destroyed.

His whole life.

The screams of pain and utter torment continued, until—

—the two of them were sent flying backwards, landing on opposite edges of the field.

Death's eyes snapped open, and his eyes widened in horror at what he saw.

His body was on fire. Starting from the legs, the flames began to work their way up his body, until they were covering his face.

"*No! You can't do this to me! I can't die! I'm Death! You cannot kill what is Death itself! I'm invincible! Death is for ever! Death is everlasting! Death cannot be killed! I cannot die!*"

Death screamed.

A scream of pure terror, as the flames burned his body into absolute nothingness.

And, just like that, Death was dead.

Simba lay on the ground, motionless.

Just like Death, he had been killed, too. His soul had been torn apart, and it wouldn't be long before he passed on into whatever lay ahead from him afterwards. He didn't know what would happen to him.

Would he just get darkness for all eternity? Would he be reunited with Nala? Would he get *anything*?

He didn't know.

Until the most shocking possibility of all happened.

Simba opened his eyes to find himself in some kind of white void. He looked around, but couldn't see anything, or anyone.

"*Where… where am I?*" he wondered, looking down. He could see his body. It was still intact. He hadn't been injured one bit. Everything was… okay.

"*You know, I don't usually do this very often.*"

Simba looked up upon hearing the voice.

He watched with the greatest of curiosity, as a lion stepped in from out of nowhere.

He seemed to shine with golden light. His fur was the most golden Simba had ever seen. His auburn eyes twinkled with brightness. His red mane stood out like nothing else Simba had ever seen before.

"*I'm not sure if this form would appease you or not,*" *the lion said.* "*I based it on you, of course. Haven't you spotted the resemblance?*"

Simba stared at the lion. "*Who… who are you?*"

"*I have many names,*" *the lion replied.* "*But for now, let's just call me You-Know-Who. I think that would be most suitable.*"

Simba liked You-Know-Who, whoever he was. He spoke with the kindest of tones, and Simba likened him to that of his own father. He was very… loveable.

You-Know-Who smiled at Simba. "*You look very troubled, Simba,*" *he said.* "*I'd go so far as to say that you've looked Death in the face – if you know what I mean.*"

"*Am I dead?*" *Simba suddenly asked, taking a step towards You-Know-Who.*

"*Yes, Simba,*" *You-Know-Who said simply.* "*You have passed in into what I like to call… Peace. The kind of… world in the middle of life and the afterlife. The stuff in between.*"

"*And what am I… doing here?*" *Simba asked, taking another step towards You-Know-Who.*

You-Know-Who stared at Simba with kind eyes. "Simba, there are lots of people in the world. A world that I created. There are good people, and there are bad people. And believe me when I say that there is much more good in it than bad. You've exemplified that greatly by what you did."

Simba felt a little confused. His memory was still a little fuzzy. He had trouble remembering what had happened in the last few moments of his life.

"*What…* did *happen?*"

"*You defeated Death,*" *You-Know-Who told him. "And to do such a thing requires a great amount of skill, intelligence, and courage. And, of course, the most important thing of all."*

"*What's that?*"

You-Know-Who poked Simba gently in the chest. "Love, Simba. Good, honest, true love. Love will always find a way. It's the only *way. And you did it. Not because you wanted revenge, or because you were angry, or scared, but…"*

His smile widened even more. "Because you loved. You're something special, Simba. Even my brother could see that – despite his immense evil. And believe me when I say that if there weren't people like you in the world, then it wouldn't exist at all."

Simba had tears in his eyes. With the exception of Nala, no one had ever spoken to him like this before. Nala and this… You-Know-Who were the only two people who seemed to realise what he really was inside.

A good, honest, true soul.

"*Now, it would be very rude of me not to present you with a choice,*" *You-Know-Who said. "You can come with me, and you can be happy for all of eternity. Or… I can send you back to your brilliant kingdom. It's not as big as mine, of course, but it's still very brilliant. All of the poor souls who died will be brought back to life, and you can carry on as normal."*

Tears streamed down Simba's cheeks, as a smile formed on his face. "I want to go back," he told You-Know-Who, his voice getting choked up. Words could not sum up the happiness he was feeling at being presented with this choice.

You-Know-Who grinned. "Very well, Simba," he said. "If that is what you wish, then I will happily return you to life."

A sob escaped Simba's throat. "Thank you."

"*And remember, Simba. Don't ever stop loving. It's love that defines who we are. Never forget that.*"

Simba smiled, and wrapped his paws around You-Know-Who, embracing him in a hug. "Thank you so much…"

You-Know-Who chuckled. "It's my pleasure, Simba." He then hugged Simba back. "I'm always happy to help."

Simba backed away, still smiling.

He watched as You-Know-Who began to fade away, along with the white void. "I'll see you again someday, Simba," he told the cub. "I can promise you that."

"*One more thing,*" *said Simba.*

"*Yes?*"

"*Are you who I think you are?*"

You-Know-Who chuckled, looking downwards. "Well… I'll let you be the judge of that."

And then You-Know-Who was gone.

Simba's smile widened, as everything began to fade. He closed his eyes, and he felt himself floating away…

He was returning to life.

Simba's eyes snapped open, and he gasped loudly, sitting up instantly.

"Whoa, whoa!" Haiba cried, holding Simba down as he tried to get up. "Take it easy, Simba!"

Simba breathed heavily, and found Haiba, Tama and Tojo staring down at him. He looked up at the sky. It was a bright, sunny morning. Birds were tweeting and the sun was shining.

"You're… you're all here," Simba finally said.

"Uh… yeah," Haiba replied. "Once that giant lion guy faded away, we thought we might as well try and help you."

Tama whispered in his ear. "He was dead."

"Yes, thank you, Tama, I was going to break that to him gently. Thanks for ruining my plan," Haiba replied. He then smiled down at Simba. "Yeah. We thought you were dead. You looked… I mean, you looked completely dead, I've gotta admit."

Simba put a paw to his temple. "I think I *was*…" he said, slowly realising that whatever had happened to him, it must have been real. "But anyway, I'm back now. I'm fine."

Tojo raised an eyebrow. "You sure?" he asked. "According to my calculations, people *never* come back from the dead."

"Yeah, well, it's one of those days," Simba replied. He looked around the field. "Where's everyone else?"

"There *wasn't* anyone else," Haiba replied, looking at Simba confusedly.

"Last night," said Simba. "Last night Death killed everyone. Nala's mother, my parents, everyone."

"Last time I checked, they were all still at the den. I think Zazu's begging for his job back." Haiba told him. "And I think *you've* gone a little crazy."

They're all alive, Simba realised. *They must have been brought back by the time that big lion guy disappeared.*

Simba's eyes then widened. "Nala," he said, before jumping to his paws and sprinting away.

Haiba, Tama and Tojo all stared at Simba ran out of the field.

"Pretty spry for a dead cub," Haiba remarked, a smile on his face.

Simba ran as fast as he could to the water hole, desperate to find out whether Nala was alive or not.

Arriving there, he stopped dead at what he saw.

Nala still lay on the ground, totally motionless.

She was still dead.

His heart sinking into his stomach, Simba slowly walked over to Nala's body, sitting down beside her.

"Nala?"

No response.

Simba sighed, his head hanging low. "No…"

He nuzzled her fur, inhaling her familiar scent. She still smelled of fresh flowers. The freshest flowers in the world.

He sobbed. "Please… please come back… I can't live without you…"

He sat up, staring at her.

There was no mistaking it.

Nala had well and truly passed on.

She wasn't coming back.

Tears welled up in Simba's eyes, as he lowered his head to Nala's cheek, kissing her softly on it.

He then slowly got up, turned around, and walked away.

Into what, he didn't know. His future was uncertain. All he knew was that he would heading on in the journey of life without Nala.

The most important person in his life.

"Simba?"

Simba stopped upon hearing the voice.

He didn't care if her voice sounded weak and frail.

Simba smiled.

Because Nala was alive.

Turning around, Simba practically dived to Nala's side. By the time he stared into her beautiful teal eyes, he was already crying.

"Nala… you're alive!" he cried, hugging her tightly. "You're alive!"

Nala smiled, not really understanding. "Of course I'm alive," she said. "Simba… why are you crying?"

Simba sniffled. "It's not because I'm sad. It's because I'm… so… happy."

He kissed her on the muzzle. Even though she still didn't get it, she kissed him back, not really caring why.

Releasing her from the kiss, Simba laughed. "I love you," he told her. "I love you so much."

Nala smiled back at him. "I love you, too, Simba."

And together, the two cubs sat there in the field, staring into each other's eyes.

They loved each other with all their hearts.

Because You-Know-Who had turned out to be very, very right.

Love always found a way, in…

The End

AN: That was beautiful. If I do say so myself. Four hours of writing well spent. Well done, ThatPersonYouMightKnow. I'm gonna give myself a round of applause. You can do that too, if you want. Or give me a review. I'm happy either way. You know me.

So, that's it for Series Three. Death – unfortunately – is dead, and everything as is it once was. You didn't *really* think Nala would stay dead for ever, did you? She was *always* going to come back. I love her too much to kill her off.

Same goes for Simba. I love that conversation between him and You-Know-Who. It was really heartfelt to me. A very sad... happy moment, if you know what I mean.

And, in case you were wondering, who *was* You-Know-Who? Well... that's kinda up to you. It's your own interpretation. That's why he's called You-Know-Who. It's completely up to you!

So, anything else? Well, I know what you want to ask me. I know the words that are tumbling out of your mouth right now. I know exactly what you're going to say.

Will there be a Series Four?

Well, *duh*!

-ThatPersonYouMightKnow

COMING SOON: Simba is sent away to a camp for misguided cubs; Nala investigates the Family of Blood; and Haiba's survival skills are put to the test...